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## Book Review of MOOCs: Opportunities, Impacts, and Challenges. Massive Open Online Courses in Colleges and Universities

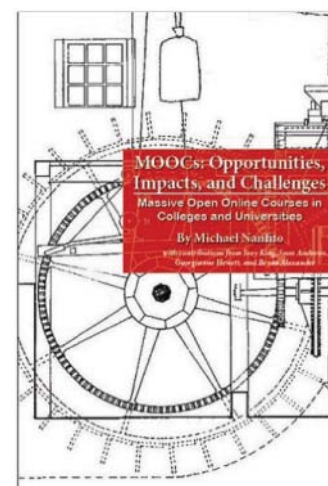
*MOOCs: Opportunities, impacts, and challenges. Massive open online courses in colleges and universities*, Michael Nanfito, Publisher: Author, December 11, 2013, 205 pages, ISBN-13: 9781494495886 (softcover).

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### Introduction

For several years there has been hype about Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in higher education. These MOOCs are changing the landscape of higher education by changing the way online education is viewed. Many unanswered questions exist for faculty, administration, and students about how these MOOCs will impact the current status quo in the American university. Now that the hype is slowing down around the creation of MOOCs, it is the time to analyze the struggles and successes of these massive online courses.

As the title points out, the author strives to analyze opportunities, impacts, and challenges for universities now that MOOCs are part of this educational landscape. Each chapter of this book has two goals. To look at things that have gone wrong in MOOCs offered up to this point, and also to look at new and innovative practices that can be incorporated into higher education. To facilitate these goals, the author has broken up this text into three sections (a) The Landscape, (b) Nuts and Bolts, (c) The Shape of Things (to consider). The author has written this book to appeal to college and university faculty and administrators, but this book would also appeal to the general public interested in the current and future landscape of higher education.



### Content

#### *Part 1: The Landscape*

The first section of this text includes three chapters: Isolating the Hype, Identifying Expectations and Hope, and Demographics of MOOCs. These three chapters focus on the current realities of MOOCs. Included in these chapters are the current public/private partnerships, current funding models, and current enrollment data in MOOCs. In this text, the author presents several questions about MOOCs. How should universities count MOOC enrollment? Why are completion rates so low in MOOCs? Should universities charge for MOOCs? Who is enrolling in MOOCs? As in most of this book, there are not answers to many of these questions, but developing an improved model of higher education begins with asking good questions.

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## ***Part 2: Nuts and Bolts***

The second section of this text includes two chapters: Impacts of Online Learning Technologies and Can MOOCs be Made to Add Up. The first chapter in this section looks at the software platforms that are being used to facilitate MOOCs. This chapter also includes information about the necessity of accessibility, copyright, and bandwidth issues that have been noted in early MOOCs.

Chapter five deals with money. This chapter looks at corporate partnerships and other methods of funding a MOOC. Some of the methods of paying for an open course seem to be selling advertising space in the course, charging for test proctoring, charging for a completion certificate, or charging for course credit. The author makes no judgment on the correct model for any institution, but does provide a rudimentary analysis of each of these scenarios.

## ***Part 3: The Shape of Things (to consider)***

The last section of this text includes four chapters: Creditable Credits, Measurement of Knowledge and Competency, The Rise of the Machines, and the Conclusion. Chapter six looks at traditional university credits and how they may apply to MOOCs. Some may ask if college credit should be given for completion of a MOOCs. Others think that credit should be given for this type of course work, but the traditional credit (which was created to reflect seat time) is no longer a valid measure for universities. Again, the author provides no judgment on this matter, but does provide information for the reader to form his/her own ideas.

Assessment of students is a hot topic in every area of education. Assessment in the MOOC area provides its own challenges. MOOC providers have the option to develop assessment systems that will provide credit for completing the MOOC. Alternatively, an option being researched by several universities is the ability to complete competency exams for courses offered at the university. This exam option would allow students to get credit for all of their prior knowledge, not just the knowledge acquired from a MOOC.

Just like assessment, big data and data analytics are growing topics in higher education. The class sizes of MOOCs provide a significant advantage in for data analytics by increasing sample sizes. MOOCs are providing a unique area for big data and data analytics. They provide a large sample size of students while completing all interactions online. This data can be analyzed to provide teaching and learning insight to future MOOCs, as well as, traditional online and face-to-face courses.

Chapter eight also briefly discusses adaptive learning. Many textbook publishers and platform vendors are working on adaptive learning environments. These environments can be a benefit to students when used correctly to give the student the level of learning he/she would benefit from the most. In the last chapter of this text, the author makes the conclusion that MOOCs are here to stay. Face-to-face courses are also here to stay. It is up to each institution to review their strategic plan and mission and decide what mode of delivery fits into these documents. MOOCs are not the answer for every higher education institution, but they will have a place in the landscape.

## **Conclusion**

This book is a great practical look at the MOOCs that have been carried out by individual universities and in university/private company partnerships. It is an easy read and applicable to university administrators and faculty members, as well as, students, parents, and anyone interested in higher education in America. The author does a good job of providing information while allowing the readers to draw their own conclusions. This book also provides a reference section in each chapter for

readers to dig deeper in any area of the areas covered. In conclusion, this book covers the 2013 landscape of MOOCs in higher education very well. The topics of online learning technologies, learning analytics, awarding college credits, and strategic planning covered in this book can also be applied to current MOOCs and traditional online courses. This book is a valuable contribution to the field of online learning through a consolidated and unbiased look at MOOCs.